RG104 E-1 Box 125 January 1882

The Mint of the United States,

AT

PHILADELPHIA, PENN.,

Assay Department, Jan. 18th, 1882

Sir:

In reply to the Director's letter of the 14th inst. respecting certain unauthorized charges upon the Assay reports, I may say that I was already aware of some of the cases cited by him, as well as others (in the last quarter) all of which are discovered too late for rectification.

The most important exhibit is that of "Schedule C" in which a Fine Bar charge was imposed (as we are now assured) contrary to the latest Regulation.

In a general way, I am compelled to state that the recent numerous changes in the tariff both as to style and rate, have given rise here, to frequent discussions as to the real intention of the language. Even my predecessor, of lifelong familiarity with this subject was so perplexed by the obscurity in the new rulings that he was obliged to reformulate the subject for his own use as the only

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The Mint of the United States,

AT

PHILADELPHIA, PENN.,

Assay Department, ..., 188 .

Safeguard against error.

Since I became the Acting Assayer my duties so increased that I was obliged to perform this clerical portion of my work hastily ~~in~~ the intervals of a pressing routine, much of which (had the force been sufficient) should have been committed to those under me. One result was, that I overlooked the change in the wording under the head of "Bar Charge", which was that the charge was to be on bullion "not required to be parted or refined". Subsequently the question arose as to whether this wholly excluded bullion that is required to be parted or refined. On general principles this would follow; but previous practice and our own judgment led us to believe that it could not have been the Director's intention entirely to abolish a long established charge, or rather to confine it (wholly) to cases not likely ever to arise here. I had seen that the old rate of 5 cents was still required but failed to observe that it was only applied (and

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The Mint of the United States,

AT

PHILADELPHIA, PENN.,

Assay Department, ..., 188 .

that by inference) to a kind of bullion which we never receive. Even when discovered, I found strong assurance in the fact that the charge had been regularly imposed since the preceding October and the error, if such it was, not discovered in the audit at Washington. I finally concluded to adhere to the inferential letter of the Regulation. I can only regret the error consequent upon both my first oversight and my perplexity arising from causes already stated.

As to the mischarges exhibited in Schedules A & B, I have nothing to say further than that they are merely clerical errors occasioned by the reduction of my force to a point rendering ~~all~~ full verifications impossible. I find it all we can do to guard against the more serious dangers in the Assay itself. But in this I feel sure that our record is up to its established standard.

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The Mint of the United States,

AT

PHILADELPHIA, PENN.,

Assay Department, ..., 188 .

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In conclusion I may say that I do not see how mistakes such as the Director points out can pass unnoticed by the two calculating clerks. I do not censure them, for I believe they have not considered the revision of the Assayer's charges a part of their duty; nor have I depended upon them for it. But you may find here a suggestion for an additional safeguard. I trust, however, that you will consider the necessity of having all the work for which I am responsible, verified to the fullest, ~~by~~ in my own department. This has been the established rule of my predecessors, and I am anxious to preserve and continue their tried and true methods.

Respectfully Yours

Jacob B. Eckfeldt

Assayer

Hon A. London Snowden

Supt. &c.

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U. S. Mint
Philadelphia Pa
January 18, 1882

Jacob B. Rickfeldt
Assayer

In explanation of
certain unauthorized
charges upon the Assay
Report, reported by the
Director, as being

~~4 Enclosures, & 2~~
~~Endorsements~~

Recd. Jan. 20th 1882.

NARA RG104, Entry 1, Box 125

[Abstract:] In explanation of certain unauthorized charges upon the Assay Reports… 100

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At Philadelphia, Penn.,
Assay Department,
January 18, 1882

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In a general way, I am compelled to state that the recent numerous changes in the tariff both as to style and rate, have given rise here, to frequent discussions as to the real intention of the language. Even my predecessor, of lifelong familiarity with this subject was so perplexed by the obscurity in the new rulings that he was obliged to reformulate the subject for his own use as the only safeguard against error.

Since I became the Acting Assayer my duties so increased that I was obliged to perform this clerical portion of my work hastily in the intervals of a pressing routine, much of which (had the force been sufficient) should have been committed to those under me. One result was, that I overlooked the change in the wording under the head of "Bar Charge", which was that the charges was to be on bullion "not required to be parted or refined". Subsequently the question arose as to whether this wholly excluded bullion that is required to be parted or refined. On general principles this would follow; but previous practice and our own judgement led us to believe that it could not have been the Director's intention entirely to abolish a long established charge, or rather to confine it (in gold) to cases not likely ever to arise here. I had seen that the old rate of 5 cents was still required but failed to observe that it was only applied (and that by inference) to a kind of bullion which we never receive. Even when discovered, I found strong assurance in the fact that the charge had been regularly imposed since the preceding October and the error, if such it was, not discovered in the audit at Washington. I finally concluded to adhere to the inferential letter of the Regulation. I can only regret the error consequent upon both my first oversight and my perplexity arising from causes already stated.

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Assayer

Hon. A. Loudon Snowden
Supt. &c &c